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LABOR

—ON—

BEHALF OF THE AUTONOMY

—OF—

CENTRAL AMERICA.

NOVEMBER, 1913

American Printing Company, Ltd., 535-7 Poydras Street, New Orleans, La.

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PROLOGUE.

As citizens of Nicaragua, we believe it convenient to give the greatest possible publicity to the writing of Dr. Policarpo Bonilla, Ex-President of the Republic of Honduras, which we consider of great interest to Latin-America, especially Central America, and more particularly as applies to Mexico and Nicaragua.

At this time, questions are being discussed in the White House at Washington, which involve the future of our race on this continent, and on which solution depends perhaps, the free existence of our nationalities, as well as maintaining the good feeling which the people of Latin-America have always had for this country, or the birth of lack of confidence, or hatred, which will not be easy to extinguish for many generations to come.

For many years Dr. Bonilla has been an active promoter of the necessity of maintaining harmony and sentiments of fraternal friendship with the Anglo-Saxon races and the Indian-Spanish, never ceasing to defend with his talent and energy, well recognized, the legitimate rights of the weak people. His writings have given light on the subject to the Statesmen of this great nation, in order to avoid that by one or more errors a path of injustice should be followed.

The writings which we are now publishing in this form are actually happening. If all our countrymen would imitate the noble example of Dr. Bonilla, and would lend their intelligence, money and work to such a just cause, we are sure that the most complete success would crown their efforts.

We insert the protest of some of those herewith signing, and the Act which was subscribed to in Managua, Nicaragua, by the members of the "Club Liberal de Estudiantes" in order to corroborate before the Senate and the people of the United States, that which we have sustained so often, that if the free vote of the people of Nicaragua was consulted, in regard to the Treaty of the Canal and other concessions, which the so-called Government of Mr. Adolfo Diaz has granted to the United States, they would all refuse similar pacts, as attempts on the sovereignty and independence of our poor country, which has fallen into the hands of a group of beings stripped of the most elemental notion of patriotism, and who only dream of remaining in power, even though by such an act they

would have to relinquish the present and the future of our sons.

In this large country, where the sentiment of the people vibrates with all spontaneity and greatness, the conduct of the men who form the actual government of Nicaragua may be appreciated, and who, for personal ambitions, sell and deliver, without listening to the public voice, the same soil which we inherited free from our glorious ancestors.

C. MARTINEZ, L.,
ROSENDO ARGUELLO,
SALVADOR LEJARZA,
ALFONSO GUERRERO,
GUSTAVO GURDIAN,
JOSE M. AMPIE, B.

New Orleans, November 30, 1913.

THE NICARAGUAN CANAL.

"I hope I will not live to see the day when the interests of my country will be placed before its honor."

These are the words of Senator Hoar to President Roosevelt when the latter requested his assistance in carrying out his policy for the acquisition of the Panama Canal concession.

A canal across Nicaragua is a route of communication between the two oceans. It would rival that of Panama, and, in the opinion of many scientists, would be greatly superior to the latter. The Nicaragua route has been the subject of a contract, or convention, made during the latter part of the Taft administration, as a consequence of the dollar policy of Secretary Knox.

The mere reading of the contract demonstrates the fact that the United States has no intention of constructing the canal, but simply wishes to prevent any other nation doing so. We do not believe that the motive was to assure the financial success of the Panama enterprise, although it has cost the United States hundreds of millions of dollars. Such a supposition cannot be entertained by a country so rich, notwithstanding when the contract was entered into the government circle was far from professing the sentiment of Senator Hoar.

The motive that inspired the negotiation was the security of the United States on this continent and the better protection of its coasts, after the completion of the great channel of communication at Panama. We think, how-

ever, that the faults of this contract, which will be commented upon further on, might be corrected, because I am confident that to-day, no matter how great or how legitimate the interests of this country may appear, they will not be considered superior to the national honor.

Let us examine the most salient points:

(a) A concession granted the United States by Nicaragua, giving the exclusive and perpetual right to construct a canal over the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua, or over any other route across its territory.

A glance at the map of Central America is sufficient to demonstrate the first substantial vice of this arrangement, which, in effect, nullifies it. Nicaragua has no right to make such a contract, because the proposed route of the canal belongs in great part also to Costa Rica. This right is recognized by the United States in public documents. In view of this fact Costa Rica has already presented its protest to the two contracting parties.

Even omitting this capital defect, this stipulation carries with it grave objections. Even if it was valid, it cannot obtain without substantial modifications. Neither the United States nor Nicaragua possess the right to condemn in perpetuity an important route of communication that nature has furnished to the commerce of the world. For the benefit of civilization, for the sake of humanity, in the name of worldly conveniences it was thought necessary to proceed to the opening of the Panama Canal, even against the protest of Colombia, the proprietor of the route. The day that a coalition of nations deems it necessary to construct the Nicaragua Canal, because one alone could not dare to undertake it, they would advance the same reasons that obtained in the Panama case, if they deemed themselves sufficiently powerful to coerce the United States, the proprietors of the concession. This is, therefore, impossible for the object in view, and would cause alarm in the nations of both continents. Yet should they consider it necessary to persist in the plan, it would be wise for the United States to limit its option to a fixed period, for example, fifty years—about two generations. During this lapse of time, considering its rapid increase in population and riches and power, it need not fear even a coalition of the nations, which have arrived at the summit of their potency and the maximum of their development, or are about to reach that final stage. They, therefore, would not attempt to attack the United States on its own continent.

But we may expect that the policy of the United States towards Latin America will be loyal and friendly, towards

the country to the north and the republics to the south. That they will act in such a manner that in the course of time it will have created such close and intimate relations between the various American nations, and by the admixture of the blood of both races and mutual assimilation of customs, a war against the United States would become a war against the entire American Hemisphere.

In every case, should the United States regard this option as a guaranty of its legitimate interests, in no manner would it be justified in depriving Nicaragua and Costa Rica, or rather Central America, which, it is to be hoped, will soon reappear in the sisterhood of nations, of the right to construct a canal on its own soil, with its own resources, which probably will then have sufficiently developed to attempt such an enterprise. Such exclusion would be unjust and would be an attack on their sovereignty.

(b) The lease of the large and small Corn Islands, in the Caribbean (Atlantic) and a point in the Gulf of Fonseca, to be chosen by the United States, for ninety-nine years, for naval stations.

The contract is renewable at the option of the United States, which converts it into perpetuity, because Nicaragua receives no compensation. But this is not the greatest fault or defect. The Gulf of Fonseca belongs to three countries, for not only Nicaragua, but El Salvador and Honduras possess sovereign rights therein. This gulf might be regarded as an inland sea, shut up within the limits of three countries. The United States cannot make use of this concession of Nicaragua without violating the rules of international law. By the mere act of granting the concession without reference to the other two countries, their sovereignty has been offended, an offense that the new American administration, which has declared its intention of treating the small republics with justice and friendship, cannot ratify. We do not know if the other republics have protested; if not, they probably soon will.

(c) Concession by Nicaragua to the United States, in perpetuity, of the right to navigation, not only of the canal, but of all its seas, together with coastwise navigation upon equal terms with the Nicaraguans.

The rules of common law, but particularly of international law, by which the contracting parties must have reciprocal rights, as sufficient compensation between each other, have been violated in this stipulation. When, as in this case, the rights are applicable to both parties, the contract that concedes all to one party alone, is called "leonine." If in this contract it were stipulated that the

Nicaraguans should enjoy equal privileges in the seas and along the coasts of the United States the injustice and the offense against a little and weak country, which is deprived of representatives with the power to demand a hearing—as has occurred in this case—and is not as a friendly country, but as a tributary, would disappear.

(d) In recompense of all that Nicaragua has conceded \$3,000,000 are promised (but not to be actually paid), which shall be employed as directed by the Department of State of the United States—(pure dollar diplomacy).

If it were possible to fix the price of the sovereignty of a country no one could conceive that Nicaragua, or rather Central America, is worth but three millions. But in case the contract is modified in such a manner as to preserve national sovereignty undoubtedly the concessions granted have a much greater value.

The only temporal option upon the route of the canal should not be estimated at less than that paid Panama for its concession, inasmuch as it tends to secure the fruit of the latter. But we can see a compensation much more rational and just than a sum of money, even if paid in cash, viz., the rehabilitation of the River San Juan, and the rendering it navigable for seagoing vessels up to and including Lake Nicaragua. This idea has always been the golden dream of Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Upon the termination of the construction work of the Panama Canal the United States will have no further use for the greater portion of the machinery employed on that enterprise. No country could therefore carry out a dredging project at as little cost as this country. It could well take up the improvement of the San Juan River, and all other necessary operations that will afford access to the great lake, which is naturally an excellent, a safe and an immense port, that could contain all the vessels that traverse the seas, if it were possible to collect them together at one time. It is impossible to estimate the rapidity of the development and the advantages that would accrue to those countries so rich in natural resources. If the convention would enter into such a stipulation, to be completed within a given time, it would be a notable compensation for the sacrifices made by the interested countries, with the exception of their sovereignty, for which nothing can compensate,

For the other concessions, once the present contract is annulled, when examined by the countries, which have the right to make them, we do not believe it would be difficult to find a just compensation.

We have purposely deferred to the last to call attention to

the principal fault in the convention entered into. We propose to demonstrate the truth of this objection.

Nicaragua had not, nor yet has, a legitimate and independent government to represent it, and much less in its relations with the government of the United States.

It is notorious that the actual president of Nicaragua was maintained in his post against a popular revolution, by the unjustifiable intervention of the American marine, and even at the present moment (nothing to the contrary has been published), a detachment of these marines occupies the presidential palace (the White House) of the capital of that republic, acting as a guard of honor to the president, or rather as a guard against his own people. It is well known that the election of that president and the assembly that ratified the convention was held under the rule of martial law, under the pressure of foreign bayonets, after an official declaration of the American minister, which signified the exclusion of all other candidates who were not in favor of the dollar diplomacy. It is plain, by consequence, that the convention celebrated was effected by the government that occupied the country with its forces. It is therefore a species of indemnity, forced upon the conquered by the conqueror, notwithstanding there had been no declaration of war. It is impossible, therefore, to view the case with the principle that is applied to consummated acts without remedy, because it is a case that depends upon the reparation that the honor and justice of the American people should accord to the overpowered Nicaraguans. This gives the right to believe that according to the declarations made by the new president and the new secretary of state of the United States, they will ignore the policy of which Nicaragua was the victim. This policy has been condemned by the United States Senate. One of these secretaries made war upon Nicaragua, another should make amends for the wrongs inflicted, and prevent the consummation of those impending.

We believe that when this convention is discussed in the Senate, if it is not rejected in its integrity, Nicaragua would then have in the bosom of that great body firm adherents, who will condemn what the government of Nicaragua, with the desire to preserve its powers, has consented to, if not solicited, on account of its being in conflict with the honor of both nations.

We believe that after this contract is annulled, if the government of the United States should persist in negotiating, it will treat with the three interested countries and with Nicaragua, only when it possesses an independent govern-

ment, the fruit of a free election, not restricted, but rather stimulated by representatives and agents of both governments.

The matter we have just treated is so complicated that we do not pretend to have fully explained it. It seems, rather, as an insinuation of a possible solution.

We have resolved and have declared in a most solemn manner, that we will not in any way or manner intervene in Central American politics. Our comments respecting the government of Nicaragua must not be regarded as an expression of personal passion, or of party feeling. We have been so often deceived by public men and militant parties that we have no especial preference and our actions are subject only to national interest.

We have preferred to date this writing on the anniversary of the independence of the United States, it being an appeal in demand of justice to the American people, and to place Central America under the aegis of the father of this great nation, whose name, on this date, more than any other, is venerated, and whose precepts and advice are doubtless heard by the present American statesmen when they treat of the solution of the Central American problem.

POLICARPO BONILLA,

Ex-President of the Republic of Honduras.

New Orleans, July 4, 1913.

PROTEST.

In *The Daily Picayune* of Sunday last, the 13th, Dr. Policarpo Bonilla, ex-President of Honduras, and a prominent public man of Central America, published an article, in which he demonstrated almost with evidence, the illegality of the treaty which the United States celebrated with Nicaragua, in regard to the Canal Zone and other valuable concessions.

As the Editors of this newspaper combat Dr. Bonilla, stating that this gentleman had no right to speak in this manner, as he is not a Nicaraguan, we, sons of the Republic of Nicaragua, which is now passing through a dark epoch of her history, wish to manifest with all the force of our patriotic sentiment, that we approve each and every one of the ideas embodied in Dr. Bonilla's article, to whom we give a vote of thanks and applause for the very high defense which he makes of our rights, which are his, as a worthy citizen of Central America, so arbitrarily opposed. At the same time, we take advantage of this oppor-

tunity to say to the worthy people of the United States, that that treaty subscribed to by a government condemned by public opinion, is absolutely void, and if the free vote of the inhabitants of Nicaragua should be consulted, it would be refused by all, as an attack upon the sovereignty of our country, and as a scandalous violation of universal right and justice.

S. GAMEZ, R.,
G. GURDIAN,
FIDEL SAVALLOS MORALES,
ALFONSO GUERRERO,
ROSENDO ARGUELLO,
SALVADOR LEJARZA,
JOSE M. AMPIE, B.
C. MARTINEZ, L.,
F. R. ZAMBRANO,
ARTURO RODRIGUEZ.

New Orleans, July, 1913.

POLICARPO BONILLA CLAIMS UNCLE SAM HAS CREATED MEXICAN PROBLEM.

Hon. Policarpo Bonilla, formerly president of Honduras and recognized as one of the ablest Central American statesmen of the present day, is temporarily in the city, at No. 1716 St. Charles Avenue. Dr. Bonilla was formerly located here, in the practice of law, but recently removed to New York, where he will make his home. He expects to leave for New York again within a few days.

When approached yesterday with a request to state the opinion of Central America regarding the Mexican imbroglio, Dr. Bonilla said, in substance:

"The American Government, as a result of the fall and death of President Madero and the consequent ascension to power of the present incumbent, General Victoriano Huerta, made a declaration which cannot fail to have immense influence upon the future development of international law. This declaration was, that the government of the United States has the right, and even the duty, to refuse to recognize the Huerta government on account of its vicious origin, while the government of Mexico continues unorganized, in accordance with a popular election, legally and properly held.

"Subsequently the American government made another

and more definite declaration relative to the Mexican situation, to the following effect: That it could not consider legal any election which might result to the benefit of President Huerta, inasmuch as any such election could not be considered a free one.

"Finally, as a result of the coup d'etat effected by President Huerta in dissolving the congress and throwing into prison upwards of 100 of the congressmen, the American Government has announced that whatever result might follow an election held during the continuance of the dictatorship created by General Huerta's action, it would be looked on as illegal.

"Everyone must recognize that these declarations, if accepted in the law of nations, will produce important effects, as tending to establish new and broad moral principles and also as helping to create a world opinion which cannot fail to be of immense benefit in stimulating and liberating public opinion within the limits of particular nations, especially those of Latin America. In support of these successive declarations of principle the United States may cite the course of the great European powers with regard to Servia. The powers set forth practically the same principles, and for a long time insisted upon maintaining them with regard to King Peter as a result of the manner in which he came to the throne, through the murder of his predecessor and a military uprising like that which brought about the elevation of Huerta to the Mexican presidency. It should be pointed out, too, that Peter was absent from Servia at the time when King Alexander and Queen Draga met with their terrible fates, and he could, therefore, not be suspected of any part therein. Yet the powers felt that they could not recognize his government under the conditions which brought it into existence.

"The United States may well cite the case of Servia if the powers should attempt to question its policy with regard to Mexico.

"Further, the United States may support its Mexican policy by the provisions of the Central American Peace Conference in Washington, which convention received the moral sanction of both the United States and Mexico, nations which figured at the conference as mediators. In this convention it is provided that none of the republics of Central America should recognize any government that was formed as the result of a coup d'etat or revolution until after a popular assembly had been elected by the unrestrained vote of the people and the country reorganized by that assembly on a constitutional basis.

"I feel sure that, if the United States Government should hereafter act in conformity with the principles which it now proclaims, the Latin Americans everywhere will accept gladly the action of the Americans on behalf of peace and order; as the savior of the rights of the people and the protectors of justice and law. I believe that the United States, by declaring itself as it has done in these three statements referred to above, has created a situation which must have great effect upon the attitude of other nations. They, too, must take the same stand. It is impossible for a great nation to favor principles which are obviously moral, pure and lofty, without all the other great powers being compelled to fall into line. If the nations agree to sever their relations with any government which falls into the hands of a tyrant, and violates the laws of humanity, then such a government will be placed at once in a position amongst the nations similar to that occupied by an individual criminal in the community whose laws he has violated. Tyranny would then become impossible. The weight of public opinion in the tyrant's own country would be sufficient to defeat his evil ambition. Revolution would thus become unnecessary. Latin America would see an end of all such cruel wars.

The United States, however, is handicapped in handling the Mexican situation by the fact that these correct principles have been tardily enunciated. Had the American Government always followed in Latin America the theory which it is now applying in the case of Mexico, the success of its diplomacy with regard to Huerta would be assured. But, unhappily, the Mexicans, both federals and rebels, cannot forget the contradictory course followed by the United States in Nicaragua. There a government which is admitted not to hold office as a result of the freely expressed desire of a majority of the population, is kept in power only by the help of a force of American marines located in the Campo de Marte—the Nicaraguan White House—in the city of Managua. The Mexicans cannot but realize that the present government of Nicaragua is the result of a military revolt against the government of President Zelaya, that this latter government was recognized by the United States as constitutional, and that the rebellion against it was not merely recognized, but encouraged by the United States. When Zelaya was driven from power the United States took no steps to see that a free election was held, but forced the victorious chiefs of the rebellion to agree to the Dawson pact, by which the succession in the presidential office was regulated. Taking

advantage of the entire dependence of the Nicaraguan Government upon the United States, the American State Department took steps to compel Nicaragua to accept an American loan, and assign its customhouses to representatives of a group of American bankers—in whose hands they still remain. In consequence of this loan a revolution broke out against the government. American marines, without the authorization of the American Congress, were landed and fought for the government against the revolutionaries. Without this aid it is unquestionable that the government could not have maintained itself. Then, at the end of this brief war President Diaz dissolved the Nicaraguan Congress, assumed the legislative power himself, and made himself dictator. While vested with the dictatorship, he called an election for president and vice president, which election took place while the country was still under martial law, and he himself was elected to the presidency. The United States, nevertheless, recognized that election as legal, and took steps to induce the other republics of Central America to recognize Diaz—a course exactly contrary to that which the American Government is following in Mexico now, and which was violative, in spirit and letter to the Washington treaty, to which the United States, while not a signatory, was nevertheless morally a party.

“Furthermore, the American Department of State has lately secured from the Nicaraguan Government a contract covering the Nicaraguan Canal route, which is considered unfair to Nicaragua by the Nicaraguans and by all the rest of Central America.

“I mention these facts as facts. They are very generally admitted here in the United States.

“All of these incidents took place under the Taft administration, but their consequences are yet being felt, because the present administration in Washington has not yet made any formal pronouncement as to its Nicaraguan policy. This pronouncement no doubt is complicated by the fact that the American marines now in Managua must eventually be withdrawn and that if they are withdrawn, except when a constitutional government acceptable to the people shall have been instituted, there can be no doubt that a revolution will immediately break out against the Diaz regime. If the United States, when it does ultimately define its policy, should decide to undo the wrong that has been done, restoring the constitutional government in Nicaragua, and causing a free election to be held for president and Congress, and thus opening a way to repudiate the

contracts now in force in favor of the American bankers, and relative to the canal—the latter agreement having been made by the United States with a government which was its creature—then the confidence of Central America in the good intentions of the United States will be restored.

“The restoration of this confidence in Central America is essential to the successful solution of the Mexican difficulty. For not only will the result of a proper policy in Nicaragua restore the good will of Central America, but that of all Latin-America and of Mexico as well, and forestall any suspicion among the great powers of the motives of the United States, whether in Nicaragua or in Mexico. A pacific mediation in Latin-American affairs by the United States would then be possible, with the approval of the very people who were being mediated with. Then the United States would not have to anticipate an armed intervention in Mexico, which would be a true calamity for both countries. Such mediation would be acceptable to both parties to the present war in Mexico, without any fear on the part of either that such intervention would lead to a situation in Mexico similar to that which now exists in Nicaragua.

“I have entire confidence that these considerations are even now engaging the attention of President Wilson and Secretary Bryan, and that they will eventually act in accordance with them. I am confirmed in this impression by reading President Wilson’s speech at Mobile, a few days ago. If they do as I anticipate, their’s will be the glory of adding to international law a new and very noble principle.

“I do not express any opinion as to the character of Huerta or whether he should or should not be recognized, I merely present the point of international law which is involved. I desire to show why it is necessary for the United States to settle the Nicaraguan question before there is any attempt to deal with Mexican affairs. The Central American problem is a large one now before American diplomats. On it depends the entire future success of American diplomacy in Latin-America. The United States has much to do on behalf of the Central American republics. I have given much thought to the means that should be employed. I believe that there are just and efficient means which, if employed, would increase good feeling between this country and the other republics of the continent, instead of extinguishing those sentiments, as has tended to result from the plan of an economical and

political protectorate which has been tried in Nicaragua. Into this I cannot enter without going into too much detail to justify taking it up just now."

LETTER.

MANAGUA, August 29, 1913

Dr. Policarpo Bonilla, New Orleans, La.,

DEAR SIR: I have the honor of transcribing to you the Act which literally says:

"In the City of Managua, at 5 p. m., on the 25th of August, 1913, (92 years of this country's independence) the undersigned members of the "Club Liberal de Estudiantes" united, called together in order to verify an extraordinary session, and informed of the energetic and brilliant protest, which was published in New Orleans by the Illustrious Central American, Dr. Policarpo Bonilla, against the ruinous concessions which the actual Government of this Republic has recently made to the United States of North America, and which compromise the dignity of Nicaragua and the territorial integrity of the Central American country, and knowing that a newspaper of the same place accuses Dr. Bonilla of not being able to say anything in protest, on account of not being a Nicaraguan, we agree:

(1) To adhere as one to that expressed in the referred-to protest, and give to Dr. Bonilla a vote of applause and of confidence for the patriotic attitude which has been taken, in favor of this unfortunate country, in the critical moments in which a Governor, without conscience, wholly lacking in patriotic sentiments and who defiles the cradle of Máximo Jerez and of José Madriz, comprising in an unqualified manner the freedom of this country, which is even more to be censured, as he wishes to make it appear that he is voicing the sentiments of the Nicaraguans in such scandalous ignominy.

(2) To send the referred-to Dr. Bonilla a faithful copy of this Act, which will bear testimony to the sentiments of gratitude which our hearts hold for him, expressing to him our confidence in that, as always, he will know how to give to the service of Central America, his valuable and well-proven patriotism and his abundant talent.

(3) The session was terminated, the present Act, which was signed by all those present, being carried: G. Narváez L., President; Horacio Mayorga G., Vice-President; Pedro Pablo Alvarez, Ruperto Romero, Ramón Zelaya M., Heliodoro Moreira M., Members. Humberto Corea M., Treas-

urer; Gustavo Garcia L., Auditor; José D. Arróliga M., J. Espinosa B., César Aranda R., Carlos A. Durán, Pedro Dona U., Aurelio Montenegro A., E. Robleto Guzmán, Inocente Leiva, José M. Lesage, Miguel Ibarra, Silviano Matamoros A., Numa P. Zelaya, F. Cuevas Guerrero, Matías Zamora, Alfonso Narváes L., J. M. Zelaya, Paulino Jarquin, Humberto Herradora U., Horacio Díaz Gómez, Gustavo Espinosa López, Armando Saavedra, C. Alberto Lopez, H. Guillen Irías, Octavio Ruiz, Active Members; F. Baltodano C., J. Jacinto Pérez, P., (Corresponding members in León) Carlos A. Garcia H., (corresponding member in Granada), Fernando Garcia, Eliseo Palma H., (corresponding members in Chinandega), Arturo Cruz, (corresponding member in Jinotepe), Nathán Sequeira, (corresponding member in Masaya), Anibal Garcia L., First Secretary; E. Fletes B., Second Secretary."

I am, Mr. Bonilla, your faithful servant,
(Signed)

ANIBAL GARCIA L.,
First Secretary.

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